

CYRUS.

A

TRAGEDY,

BY MR. JOHN HOOLE.

ADAPTED FOR

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED AT

THE THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,

By Permission of the Manager.

The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation; and those printed in Italics are the Additions of the Theatre.


LONDON:

Printed for the Proprietors, under the Direction of JOHN BELL,

British Library, STRAND,

Bookseller to His Royal Highness the PRINCE OF WALES.

M DCC XCV.





TO THE
DUTCHESS
OF
NORTHUMBERLAND, &c.

MADAM,

PERMIT me to assure your Grace of the deep sense I retain of your great goodness and condescension in the protection which you have been pleased to extend to my first effort in the Drama.

Were I to listen to those suggestions that naturally arise in the mind of a writer, on the first dawns of success, the favourable reception which this Tragedy has met with from the public, would lead me to hope that it might not be found wholly unworthy of your Grace's patronage: but when I reflect how many circumstances contribute to please on the stage, where every thought or expression is enforced with the graces of action and utterance, I cannot but be anxious lest the Reader should withhold that approbation in the closet which the Spectator testified in the representation.

It is with the utmost deference I submit the following scenes to your Grace's perusal, and am,

MADAM,

With the greatest respect,

Your Grace's most obliged, most obedient,

And most devoted Servant,

JOHN HOOLE.

Clement's Inn, Dec. 14, 1763.

PROLOGUE.

Spoken by Mr. Smith.

*NEW to the Stage, before this dread array,
Prepar'd to offer here his virgin play,
Our tim'rous author, diffident of praise,
Grafts his first laurels on another's bays ;
Takes from another's breast the gen'rous fire,
And fits to English strains a foreign lyre.
Aspires to please by unsuspected means,
Importing passion from Italian scenes ;
Where heroes combat to soft music's note :
And tyrants warble through an eunuch's throat :
To symphony despairing lovers sigh ;
And struggling traitors by the gamut die !
Yet here a living bard, whose fame outruns
The foremost of the tuneful drama's sons,
Can ev'n in song his magic power dispense,
At once uniting harmony and sense.
From him our poet now essays to write,
And plans from him the story of to-night ;
A well-known tale—who has not heard the name
Of Cyrus, and the rising Median fame ?
Each puling school-boy can discuss the theme ;
The suff'ring grandson, and the monarch's dream.*

*O! should his genius catch the inspiring thought,
And nobly copy what was nobly wrought ;*

*Or where the master's hand but sketch'd the line,
With happy warmth fill up the bold design ;
Then ev'ry figure with full force imprest,
May wake the feelings of th' impassion'd breast ;
While each bright eye, amidst this circle, pays
The tribute of involuntary praise.*

Dramatis Personæ.

COVENT-GARDEN.

Men.

ASTYAGES,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Richardson.
CAMEYSES,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Farren.
CYRUS,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Holman.
HARPAGUS,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Harley.
MITHRANES,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Hull.
MIRZA,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Ledger.

Women.

MANDANE,	-	-	-	-	Miss Hopkins.
ASPASIA,	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Yates.

Officers, Guards, Messengers, &c.

SCENE, On the borders of Medea.



CYRUS.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Wood ; a stately Pavilion erected for ASTYAGES ; View of a Temple at a distance. Enter MANDANE and ASPASIA.

Mandane.

BEHOLD the limits of the Median land,
And see the temple where Astyages
Returns each year to shed a victim's blood,
On great Astarte's altar—Oh ! Aspasia !
This is the place, the day, nam'd by my father
To bless me with the tenderest interview ;
Here shall I meet again my long-lost Cyrus :
Is he not found, was he not snatch'd from death,
Sav'd by some God to fill these eager arms !
And is not this the happy destin'd grove,
Where once again I shall embrace my child ?

Asp. 'Tis true—but what can all this passion mean ?

Mand. What can it mean?—where is my Cyrus hid ?
What does he ?—wherefore comes he not ?

Asp. Alas !

Time, wing'd with swiftest pinions, lags behind
The ardent wishes of a mother's love.
Thou know'st the hour of sacrifice is fix'd

For his reception; that we must not pay
Our vows to night's pale queen, till yonder sun
Declines to ev'ning skies, and now his beams
But just begin to dawn o'er eastern hills.

Mand. Alas! Aspasia, still I fear——

Asp. And wherefore?

When now Astyages no longer seeks
His death, but wishes to behold his Cyrus,
To give him back a parent's kind protection,
And shew, in him, our Media's future king?

Mand. Yet if the visions of the night may claim
Belief——a dreadful dream——

Asp. And shall Mandane

Be mov'd with shadows! sure you should detest
Such visionary fears; from these you first
May date your sorrows: well you know your father,
On the vain credit of a dream, condemn'd
Your Cyrus to be slain; nor this suffic'd;
But that the nuptial bed no more might prove
Fruitful to thee in children, and to him
Give endless cause of terror, far from hence
To banishment he sent your lord, your husband,
You dear Cambyzes, where, in Persia's realm
He lives, an alien to his consort's arms.

Mand. And yet 't is not a dream that twice ten years
Have seen the cheerful harvest crown our fields,
Since at his birth my child was ravish'd from me,
On this blest day I hope once more to see him,
And thinks Aspasia now to find me calm?

Asp. You lost your Cyrus when your age had scarce
Beheld the round of thirteen annual suns;
And can you still so deeply feel the grief
Imprest in life's first bloom?

Mand. Alas! Aspasia,
Thou know'st not what it is to be a mother.

Asp. Yet your Aspasia too has known her sorrows:
If you lament a husband and a son,
I mourn a brother's loss, who fell beneath
The vengeful anger of Astyages.

Mand. There, there, my bosom shar'd thy father's sufferings.

And oft I've wept in secret his misfortunes.
Unhappy man! a fatal recompense
My father gave thee for his grandson sav'd!
What hast thou suffer'd for thy love to Cyrus,
Thy loyal truth!—but see, the good man comes,
He comes, perchance, with tidings of my son—
O haste, my Harpagus, where is he?

Enter HARPAGUS.

Har. Princess,
Your son is now arriv'd.

Mand. Arriv'd! ah! where?

Har. He must not, till Astyages appears,
Presume to pass the borders of the kingdom:
'T is so decreed.

Mand. Then let us seek him out,
Where now impatient, with long exil'd feet,
He comes to tread his native wish'd-for soil,
And ease a mother's pains.

[*Going.*

Har. It must not be.
Mandane, stay—your father will be present,
A witness to your meeting.

Mand. Wherefore then
This long delay?—O, did Astyages
Feel half Mandane feels, these arms had now

Embrac'd my dearest Cyrus! what detains
My father thus?

Har. Ere now he's on his way;
But the long pomp that waits on Media's kings,
Forbids his swift approach.

Mand. And must Mandane
Attend the dull and tedious forms of state!
Aspasia, if thou lov'st me, instant go,
And seek the blooming youth—Yet stay, and hear me——
Observe his air, his voice, his ev'ry look;
Mark if his features bear his mother's likeness,
Or his lov'd father's—But, alas! I rave;
Thou never knew'st his hapless banish'd father!
Relate my sufferings, and enquire of his:
Ask what kind hand supplied a mother's care;
How when, Mandane, torn with heart-felt anguish,
Deem'd him a prey to savage rage, the woods
Preserv'd him in their hospitable shades.
Tell him—O Heaven! I know not what—but tell him
More than a mother's fondness can express,
Not what I speak, but all I wish to utter.
O fly! and with the rapid speed of thought,
Return to my impatience. [Exit Aspasia.]

Har. Should this day,
That gives once more your son to your embrace,
Restore Cambyzes to you——

Mand. Would to Heaven
I might indulge that hope—All gracious powers!
What torture in his exile must he feel,
To hear his son yet lives; to know this day
Restores my Cyrus to his native land;
Yet be deny'd to gaze with transport on him,
Or clasp him in a father's sheltering arms!

Har. Hear, and be silent; happier fortune now
Prepares to crown each wish your soul can form;
Cambyses is at hand.

Mand. Cambyses! where?
O! tell me, Harpagus.

Har. I dare not further
Explain it now—let this suffice.

Mand. Alas!
I fear thou dost deceive me.

Har. No, Mandane,
Trust to my faith. This day you shall behold him.

Mand. Ye powers! what deluge of unhop'd-for bliss
Now bursts upon me! O, my son! my husband!
Happy Mandane—Harpagus, my friend,
Teach me to bear this wild excess of joy.

Har. Be calm, compose your looks; let not the king
Perceive this conflict of tumultuous passions.

Mand. Yes, I will go, and meet Astyages;
Will strive to hide the strugglings of my soul,
Check these emotions, though my swelling bosom
Can scarce find room to hold the mighty transport;
Transport, which only such as I can feel,
And only those, who love like me, conceive. [Exit.

Har. [Alone.] Thus far 't is well. This day I mean to
shew

The hidden Cyrus to the expecting world.
The realm is ripe for a revolt? the nobles
Resolve to invest him with the regal sway—
But my resentment still demands its victim:
Yes, dearest shade of my lamented son,
For ever present to thy father's sight,
Thou yet shalt be appeas'd; for this so long
I've worn the mask of loyalty—but now

Vengeance is on the wing, she tow'rs aloft,
And, like an eagle, kens her destin'd prey.

[Exit.

SCENE II.

Changes to a Grove; outside of a small building of simple architecture, representing the dwelling of Mithranes. Enter CYRUS and MITHRANES.

Cyrus. Can it be possible? O say, my father,
For such thou still hast been, am I indeed
The Median Cyrus? Sure I dream! am I
The offspring of Cambyzes and Mandane?
That wretched offspring, whom Astyages
Sentenc'd to die, when scarce the vital spirit
Breath'd from his infant lips.

Mith. Believe me, prince,
Thou art that offspring.

Cyrus. Tell me then, Mithranes,
How many bear the name? Thou know'st already
One Cyrus, on the borders of the land
Is now arriv'd; and comes not here the king
To welcome his approach?

Mith. The king's deceiv'd;
That Cyrus is but feign'd—thou art the true.

Cyrus. Whence is this mystery?

Mith. Astyages,
When thou wert yet unborn, beheld a vision
That fill'd his soul with dread.

Cyrus. Of this, Mithranes,
Thou need'st not speak; oft have I heard it told,
How, from his dream, the magic had denounc'd,

That of Mandane should a child be born,
That must one day deprive him of his throne :
And well I know at Cyrus' luckless birth,
The rigid charge was given to Harpagus,
To end his life, and ease a monarch's fears.

Mith. From thence begins a tale thou ne'er hast heard :
The cruel sentence Harpagus receiv'd,
His heart refus'd to obey ; to me he brought thee,
Wrapp'd in a regal mantle.

Cyrus. Then 't was thou
That in the woods expos'd——

Mith. Not so ; be patient——
My consort then (mark well the providence
That watch'd thy preservation) had brought forth
A lifeless child ; thy harmless innocence
Excited pity ; on thy tender cheek
Stood the big tear, as if thy heart already
Were conscious of misfortune, while thy hands
Were stretch'd, as if to implore protection from us.
My Barce wept, and with a mother's fondness,
Clasp'd in her arms, she strain'd thee to her bosom,
Lull'd thee to rest, and hush'd thy little sorrows.

Cyrus. Forgive me, sir, if gratitude awhile
Breaks in upon your tale, and fills my eyes
In dear remembrance of your Barce's virtues ;
She whose indulgence watch'd my helpless years.

Mith. Thou wert, indeed, the darling of her age.
As my own son I bred thee in these shades,
And call'd thy name Alcæus ; in thy stead,
Exposing in the wood the lifeless infant.

Cyrus. What of Astyages ?

Mith. When he believ'd
His dire command completed, nature's voice

At length awaken'd in his breast remorse.
Full fifteen years did Harpagus remain
Without disclosing aught; then seem'd the tale
Ripe for discovery: yet he first would prove
The current's depth before he left the shore.
Five years have now elaps'd, since through the realm
The tidings spread, that Cyrus being found
An infant in the forest, was preserv'd
And liv'd among the Scythians: such report
Perhaps the impostor rais'd, or from the rumour
Perhaps he sprung: but be it as it may,
Some bold adventurer, lur'd with hopes of greatness,
Usurps thy name.

Cyrus. Is this the Cyrus then
Who comes——

Mith. The same—but mark me—Harpagus
Procur'd the fiction credit with the king;
For thus he reason'd—should Astyages
With joy receive the news, I safely may
Reveal the kingdom's heir; or should his fears
Once more return, and prompt some new design
Against the prince, the baffled aim will light
Upon the impostor's head.

Cyrus. But since the king
Confesses now such tenderness for Cyrus;
At length recalls him from a life of exile,
To clasp him to his bosom, wakens all
The soft endearments in a mother's soul,
And every tender passion in a son;
Wherefore should unavailing caution still
Withhold the secret from him?

Mith. Harpagus
Relies not firmly on the royal goodness:

For when he own'd, that with compassion mov'd,
He had not slain the infant, but expos'd him
Amidst the woods, Astyages to punish
His disobedience, doom'd to cruel death
His only son; and though the king now seems
To mourn his grandson's fate, and wears the semblance
Of deep remorse, yet sure but ill agrees
Such love for thee, with such resentment shewn
Against thy kind preserver.

Cyrus. Tell me then,

Why at this solemn pomp of sacrifice,
Are all our country's nobles here conven'd,
But to receive the lawful successor?
And shall not Cyrus, conscious of his birth,
Strip from a bold impostor his false titles,
And stand reveal'd to all? Oh! sir, by you,
Even 'midst these rude, uncultivated wilds,
My soul has long been train'd to virtuous daring;
And shall I now ignobly lurk conceal'd?
What can the subject hope from such a prince?
That king will never guard his people's rights,
Who wants the courage to assert his own.

Mith. O, greatly urg'd—yet think not, my lov'd prince,
Mithranes less regards thy fame, than safety.
Suppress a few short hours this generous ardour;
Soon as yon sun shall reach the western waves,
Thou shalt be shewn to all; thou shalt embrace
Thy parents yet unknown; th' assembled nobles
Shall own thy cause, and ev'n Astyages
Receive in thee the kingdom's better hope.

Cyrus. What say'st thou? shall I then with filial transport
Embrace his honour'd knees, whom fate deny'd
To guard my youth with his paternal care?
Hang on a mother's circling arms, that never

Till this blest moment clasp'd a banish'd son,
And never rear'd his infant years with fondness?

Mith. Thou shalt, my prince! Cambyses will ere long
Arrive; already is Mandane here.

Cyrus. Mandane!—let me fly to ease her breast
Of every racking doubt, and dry the tears
Of an afflicted parent.

[*Going.*

Mith. Hear me still——

Cambyses and Mandane both suppose
The impostor is their son; and much it now
Imports they should be still deceiv'd, till time
Matures our enterprize; for should Mandane
Learn that in thee she lives——

Cyrus. Fear not, Mithranes;
This day the mighty secret shall remain
Lock'd in my breast; I never will reveal it
Till thou permitt'st me——let me but behold her——
Farewell—Dost thou still doubt my faith—I call
On every god to witness to my vows.

[*Going.*

Mith. Oh—no, forbear—when wilt thou learn to curb
These eager sallies of unbridled passion?
This is the awful day that teems with thine
And Media's fate! Thou know'st that ev'ry deed
Must first begin with Heaven—Go, seek the temple,
Devoutly there implore the gracious gods
To smile propitious on our hopes, and learn
Henceforth to moderate—What have I said?
Cyrus, forgive this licence of my tongue,
So long accusom'd to a father's language;
I now must change my speech—I am no more
The rigid parent that reproves his son:
I am a subject, that with faithful counsels
Would aid his sovereign.

Cyrus. Thou art still my father,

My dearest father—I confess my warm
Ungovern'd temper; but I will suppress
These starts of youth, and learn to tread the path
Thy wisdom points: too dearly should I buy
The throne, if I no more must call thee father.

Mith. Yes, royal youth, thou shalt be still my son,
Son of my fondest hopes; for thee I've watch'd
The tedious round of twenty circling years
Each turn of fate, in this sequester'd dwelling,
Far distant from the busy haunts of men,
Where, but on this returning annual pomp
Of sacrifice, the print of human feet
Scarce marks the unworn turf.

Cyrus. Once more farewell.
Yes, I will seek yon hallow'd roof to raise
Devotion's voice, and supplicate the gods
To breathe a hero's spirit in this breast;
That when the ripening hours shall bring to light
The wish'd events of this auspicious day,
My soul, enlarg'd to thoughts of conscious greatness,
May hail with virtuous pride its birth to glory. [*Exit.*]

Mith. All-gracious Heaven, with thy protecting arm
Defend my prince! Let me in one glad moment
Reap the full harvest of my pious toils,
And old Mithranes then has liv'd enough—
But see where Harpagus appears.

Enter HARPAGUS.

My friend,
Where is Astyages?

Har. But now arriv'd:
I left him in his tent in gloomy silence,
As if revolving in his mind the end

Of this day's sacrifice. He sends me hither
To learn if Cyrus yet approach the borders,
And what the train he brings.

Mith. Believ'st thou then
He means, indeed, to answer Media's hopes,
And give the realm a successor in Cyrus?

Har. Trust me, Mithranes, never. If sometimes
He feigns a momentary joy, or speaks
With seeming fondness of the approach of Cyrus,
Methinks through all the dark disguise appears
Some cruel purpose brooding in his soul.

Mith. Thanks to the power that thus provides a victim
To frustrate ev'ry ill that thence might threaten
The safety of the prince : this bold impostor,
Who wears his name, shall with his name inherit
Each evil that's design'd him.

Har. Nor does Media
Owe less her thanks to Heaven, that gave Mithranes
To rear her prince to every future greatness,
In virtue's safest school, an humble station,
Far from the splendid vices of a court,
Where golden luxury, and silken sloth,
Enervate our unhappy sons. But say,
Hast thou to Cyrus yet reveal'd his birth?

Mith. I have.

Har. And how did he receive the tidings?

Mith. Amaz'd at first he heard the important truth ;
But when convinc'd—O, had you then beheld
His generous ardour ;—scarce could I prevent
His filial love from seeking out Mandane,
And throwing at her feet her darling son.

Har. Of that we must beware. The weighty secret
Of his concealment must not be entrusted

To a fond mother's transports : not Cambyses
Knows yet this mystery of fate.

Mith. 'T is strange
Cambyses comes not yet.

Har. Doubt not, Mithranes ;
Cambyses will be present ere the hour
Fix'd for the sacrifice ; perhaps, ev'n now
He lurks disguis'd upon the neighb'ring confines.
He must be wary : well thou know'st what danger
Awaits him, should Astyages discover
His mandate disobey'd—but let us part,
We must not thus be found ; the king may soon
Be here ; where'er he goes, pale visag'd fear,
And black suspicion on his steps attend. [*Exeunt severally.*]

ACT II. SCENE I.

Continues. Enter MITHRANES.

Mithranes.

CYRUS not yet return'd ! still, still my breast
Owns all the fears and fondness of a father—
But hark ! this way I hear the sound of feet—
Some stranger by his dress—O, mighty gods !
What do I see—sure I should know that face !

Enter CAMBYSES, disguis'd.

Cam. If in this land you venerate the powers
Of hospitality, direct me, friend,
To where the annual sacrifice is held :
I come a votary from distant climes,

To pay my offering at Astarte's shrine,
And view the sacred pomp.

Mith. Myself will thither

Conduct your steps ; it must, it must be he. [*Aside.*]

Cam. The gods, protectors of your Median race,
Repay the courteous deed—but tell me further ;
How may a friendless stranger gain access
To princely Harpagus ?

Mith. The king now holds him
On business of the state : This day the people
Expect to find the kingdom's heir restor'd ;
If haply thou hast heard the name of Cyrus.

Cam. Fame has through many a land divulg'd your story :
I knew Cambyzes ; both in Persia born,
One city bred us :—I remember well,
A private warrior, when he sought the court
Of Media's king, till, by his merit rais'd,
He gain'd Mandane's hand ; but dearly since
He paid the price of love with years of exile.

Mith. Shall I yet speak ! [*Aside.*]—Since thou indeed
hast known [*To Cam.*]

Unfortunate Cambyzes : But behold
Astyages is near—avoid his presence :
Thy garb would breed suspicion in the king,
And danger to thyself—in that close covert
A while remain conceal'd. [*Cam. retires.*]

Enter ASTYAGES.

Asty. Guards, keep the pass
And suffer none to enter here. [*Speaks to Mirza entering.*]

Mith. [*Aside.*] What means
Astyages ! has he beheld this stranger !

Or has some spy in evil hour for Cyrus,
Reveal'd the secret of his fate?

Asty. Mithranes!

Mith. My sovereign liege!

Asty. Are we alone?

Mith. We are.

Asty. Come near, Mithranes; tell me, dost thou still
Retain in mind remembrance of the good
I did thee once?

Mith. My mind retains it all.

When first receiv'd into your royal court
I ow'd your bounty much; and, when I left
The pomp of cities for the sylvan wild,
It was your hand that gave this wish'd retreat.

Asty. Say, if my happiness, if all I sought
Depended on thy zeal, might I not then
Expect to find thee grateful?—answer me.

Mith. What is there in my power that can avail
The welfare of my sov'reign:

Asty. Yes, my friend,
Thou canst do much, canst firmly fix the crown
Upon thy sov'reign's brow—know, all I seek
Is in thy hand;—yes, spite of our decree
Cyrus preserv'd——

Mith. What will my fate do with me! [Aside.

Cam. Did not my ears receive the name of Cyrus?

[Listening.

Asty. Thy colour fades; thou dost perhaps divine
What I would say.

Mith. Thus prostrate at your feet—— [Kneels.

Asty. No, be not terrified, but rise—the deed
Is easier than thy fears have form'd it—Cyrus
Believes our summons, and already comes

With some few Scythians, on the kingdom's borders,
To wait the expected meeting—well thou know'st,
For years accustom'd to this rustic dwelling,
Each outlet of the wood, and may'st with ease
In some close ambush so dispose of Cyrus,
That he may never wake my terrors more.

Cam. Inhuman murderer! [Aside.

Asty. What say'st thou?—speak.

Mith. It shall be so—my king shall be obey'd. [Aside.

Cam. Most impious traitor! [Aside.

Asty. For the attempt thyself

Alone will not suffice; thou must with care
Select thy trusty partners of the deed.

Mith. There needs no other but my son Alcæus:

'T were dangerous to confide to other hands

An enterprize of such import—Alcæus,

Skill'd in the winding mazes of the wood,

Through which, at early dawn, he oft is wont

To urge the savage chase, shall unsuspected

Reach, with a distant shaft, his life——

Asty. Enough——

'T is well conceiv'd:—go, then, my best Mithranes,

Instruct thy son; tell him, Astyages

Expects from him the end of all his terrors;

The deed once done I'll plant him next my heart,

To grow to wealth and honours.

Mith. Heavenly powers!

[Aside.

Defend me, still, and, from suspicion's eye

Preserve yon stranger!

[Exit.

Asty. Now, methinks, my mind

Is eas'd of every fear—Let Cyrus die,

And with him die the many doubts that shake

The bosom of Astyages.

Enter CAMBYSES.

Cam. Revoke

The dreadful mandate which thy lips pronounc'd,
Or, by th' eternal gods, the great avengers
Of guiltless blood——

Asty. Ha! traitor! what art thou,
That lurking thus unseen?—Death be thy portion! [*Draws.*

Cam. Nay, then—— [*Draws.*

Asty. Off, peasant!—Dar'st thou lift thy hand
Against the sun's vicegerent?

Enter MIRZA and Guards.

Mirza. Seize the ruffian,
And instant drag him hence.

[*Cambyses is disarmed, and at a signal from Astyages
the Guards retire.*]

Asty. Audacious villain!

Know'st thou what punishment awaits thy crime?
Already torture shakes his scorpions o'er thee,
And anguish claims thee as her destin'd prey:
Confess what motives urg'd thy desperate deed.

Cam. Whate'er my motives, know, the soul who dares
Attempt a tyrant's life, has fortitude
To brave whate'er a tyrant can inflict.

Asty. Presumptuous slave!

Cam. Look here, Astyages,
View well this face; do not these features wake
Thy recollection? Twice ten years of suff'rance
Have wrought some change, yet sure here still remains
The trace of what I have been.

Asty. Ha! whate'er
Thou art, rightly my better genius warn'd me,

That something baneful to my nature, lurk'd
Beneath those abject vestments.

Cam. Tyrant, yes ;
'T is not for nought thy conscience takes the alarm ;
For he that 's injur'd ever is the bane
Of him that injures ; let this meeting then
Rouse each awak'ning terror in thy soul,
To see the man thou most have wrong'd—Cambyses.

[Throws open his disguise.]

Asty. Thou wretch ! how hast thou dar'd to enter Media
Against our high decree ? And com'st thou too,
Assassin like, with sacrilegious rage
To lift thy hand against a monarch's life ?
But thou shalt find a welcome.

Cam. Yes, such welcome
As thy paternal love prepares for Cyrus ;
Thou hoary ruffian ! was it then for this
The nobles of the realm were summon'd here ?
For this was Cyrus call'd, to fall a victim
To thy death-dealing minion—curs'd Mithranes !

Asty. Confusion ! am I then betray'd ?

[Aside.]

Cam. For me !

I scorn thy feeble menaces ; I know
My life awaits thy nod—but mark me well,
The time may come, even now perhaps the black,
The fatal hour impends, when thou shalt feel
The avenging hand of Heaven.

Asty. What say'st thou, ha !
Does secret treason lurk amid the smiles
Of seeming loyalty ? Give me to know
What mischief threatens.

Cam. Seek to know no more ;
Let it suffice I've given thy terrors birth,
And be it thine to cherish them.

Asty. Ho! guards!
Convey this traitor to yon city's walls,
And lay him in some loathsome dungeon; there,
There shalt thou learn to speak.

Cam. Thy rage is fruitless;
Hope not from me to be inform'd of aught
That may import thy safety.

Asty. Lead him hence—
I'll hear no further—shall a wretch proscrib'd
Reville the awful majesty of kings;
And dare his anger, whose all-powerful word
Can in a moment fix his doom?—Away.

Cam. Come, whither must I go? Conduct me where
The cavern'd earth unfolds her deepest prison,
Where light ne'er dawns; yet steady virtue there
Shall dissipate the gloom; there the firm soul
Shall smile in torture, when amidst the blaze
Of courts, the tyrant's mind shall shrink in darkness,
And while security surrounds his throne,
Trembles with fancy'd terrors! *[Exit guarded.]*

Asty. Yes, I feel
His threats already here; my lab'ring breast
Teems with new fears.—*Mirza!*

Mirza. *[Coming forward.]* What would my sov'reign?

Asty. Whence did this daring rebel break upon us,
And how elude thy vigilance?

Mirza. My lord,
No steps un-notic'd could have pass'd the guard;
Cambyses must have lurk'd in secret here
Beneath some neighb'ring shade; nor knew we ought
Of danger near your person, till the sound
Of tumult brought us to your timely rescue.

Asty. *[Aside.]* What should I think?—Is then Mithranes
false?—

Mirza, I thank thy zeal ; be ever thus
And I'll reward thee—sure some deep design
Is brooding now against me.—

Enter MANDANE.

Mand. Hear me, sir——

O ! by these tears——

Asty. What would my daughter?—Rise——

Mand. O, never, never !——Here I'll grow to earth,
Till pity, kindling in a father's breast,
Extend a gracious hand to save Cambyses.

Asty. Cambyses ! name him not.

Mand. Alas ! my father,
After a tedious twenty years of absence,
Fate now returns him, but returns in vain ;
If, by your anger, he's deny'd to view
His lov'd Mandane, to behold his son
Preserv'd ; but ah ! for him preserv'd in vain !

Asty. Hadst thou, Mandane, heard his rebel threats,
His daring insults breath'd against the throne——

Mand. Forgive the transport of a bosom, torn
With double pangs, the father, and the husband :
Alas ! perhaps he knew not Cyrus liv'd,
He knew not that Astyages had fix'd
This day, to meet and name him for his heir.

Asty. And pleads my daughter in defence of him
Whose impious hand assail'd my life ?

Mand. O, Heaven !

Asty. Tell me, when treason works the secret mine
To sap my kingdom, shall Mandane's tongue
Extenuate his offence who plans my fall ?
But thou, perhaps, art privy to their wiles,
Perhaps confederate with thy father's foes.

Mand. What do I hear ?—And can your thoughts suggest

(My soul is chill'd with horror) that Mandane
Would join in murder's black conspiracy
Against the hand that gave me life?

Asty. I know not—

Whom should I fear?—Methinks I see rebellion
Where duty's most profess'd! and those my power
Can shake with terror, give me equal dread:
But for Cambyzes, wouldst thou prove thy truth,
Name him no more.—Thus much a father grants,
He shall not die—I to your tears remit
His forfeit life, which else had fallen a victim
Of torture's sharpest pangs—but as I prize
My crown, again he's banish'd from the land. [Exit.

Mand. And is it thus my fate begins to smile?
Is this the meeting Harpagus foretold?
O, my Cambyzes?

Enter CYRUS.

What art thou, that break'st
Thus importunely on my grief?

Cyrus. Forgive
This seeming rudeness, beauteous excellence;
A son of freedom, nurtur'd in these woods,
Now shuns a fate, that threatens that liberty
Which bounteous nature gave.

Mand. What dost thou mean?

Cyrus. The royal guards pursue my steps, and soon
These limbs, that till this hour have rang'd at large
O'er the steep hill, or through the forest shade,
May feel the galling weight of servile chains.

Mand. Declare thy crime.

Cyrus. My crime was self-defence:
Th' oppressor's sword was rais'd against my life,

But Heaven then nerv'd my strength, and from this arm
The wretch receiv'd that death he meant to give.

Mand. What means my throbbing bosom?—Gentle youth,
Proceed—methinks I feel some secret impulse
To listen to thy story.

Cyrus. As but now
Alone I sought the temple, from the woods
I heard a cry of deep distress : I turn'd
And saw two ruffians seize a beauteous maid ;
Fir'd at the brutal deed I cast my dart,
And one I slew ; the other, struck with terror,
Forsook th' affrighted fair, who trembling fled,
And ere I could pursue her steps, a youth
Of fierce demeanour, clad in rich attire,
With sword unsheath'd, impetuous cross'd my way,
And menac'd vengeance for his slain companion—
But see the nymph herself, whom fav'ring Heaven
Sent me to save.

Enter ASPASIA.

Mand. Wert thou the maid distress'd?
And is it true, that thou hast 'scap'd the arm
Of brutal violence?

Aspa. Yes, fell destruction
Was hov'ring o'er me, when behold the friend,
That freed Aspasia from impending ruin,
With peril of his own—but, thanks to Heaven,
My brave defender lives. Say, gallant youth,
How did'st thou 'scape the ruffian's boist'rous rage,
That threaten'd thee with death?

Mand. Relate the sequel ;
For since Aspasia bears an interest in it,
My heart more freely listens to thy tale.

Cyrus. But little now remains—the fierce invader
Still press'd upon me, whilst a river flow'd
Behind my steps, preventing all retreat;
Disarm'd, what could I do? Necessity
Supply'd me with new arms; sudden I snatch'd
A craggy flint from the rough pebbled shore,
And launch'd against the foe; a sanguine stream
Bath'd all his face, the sword forsook his hand,
And as he stagger'd round, with dying grasp
He seiz'd a bough, that over-hung the tide,
Which yielding to his weight, at once he fell,
And in the waves was lost.

Mand. Is this the crime
That justice should pursue? Yes, my Aspasia,
'Midst all the anguish of a breaking heart,
I feel a dawn of joy for thy deliverance.

Aspa. What new distress afflicts Mandane?

Cyrus. Gods!

[*Aside.*

Was it Mandane whom I thus unknown
Have held in converse?

Mand. Oh! I'll tell thee all,
And rest my sorrows on thy faithful bosom.

Enter Officer and Guards.

Offi. Secure yon traitor, who has dar'd to raise
His sacrilegious hand against his prince.

Mand. Against his prince!

Offi. 'T is to his arm we owe
The death of Cyrus.

Mand. Say'st thou—death of Cyrus!

Cyrus. It must be so—mysterious Providence! [*Aside.*
This hand, impell'd by some o'er-ruling power,
Has slain th' impostor that usurp'd my name.

Mand. And did I hear thee right? Speak, speak, Aspasia
What meant his words?—Was Cyrus then the slain?
O, impious villain!

Offi. 'T is, alas! too true,
The prince is dead, and by this youth.

Aspa. O! Heaven!

Cyrus. [*Aside.*] I must reveal my self—but no, I have
sworn

To keep my birth still secret.

Mand. O, perfidious!

And cam'st thou then to me! O, all ye Gods!
To tell a well-feign'd story of thy deeds,
And thus deride a wretched mother's grief.

Cyrus. Alas! I knew not, princess——

Mand. Peace, deceiver;

Thou knew'st too well—thy tale is falsehood all.
O my lov'd son!—thy mother's better part!
And have I lost thee thus again!—distraction!
O! my torn heart!

Cyrus. I cannot bear her grief.

[*Aside.*

Mand. Speak, dear Aspasia, were not then my fears
Indeed prophetic? thus to lose a son,
To find my hopes thus blasted in their spring,
A mother's fondest hopes!

Cyrus. O, Heaven! you know not——

The youth who fell beneath this hand—O! torture.

Mand. Guards, drag the monster strait before the king—

Aspa. O, princess, calm the tempest of your rage;
If by resistless fate impell'd, the youth
Incurr'd this guilt, indulgent Heaven extends
Forgiveness to involuntary crimes;
Then imitate the mercy of the Gods.

Mand. No more, Aspasia—the rentless Gods

To me no mercy shew—my son is murder'd,
My husband doom'd once more to banishment!
What is there else remains in angry fate
To add to what I suffer! every hour
Of my succeeding life is mark'd for horror,
And all my thoughts are now despair and madness. [*Exit.*

[*Manent* Cyrus, Aspasia, Officer, and Guards.

Cyrus. Go, fair Aspasia, follow and support her,
And O! in pity sooth a mother's sorrows.

Aspa. A mother's sorrows from Aspasia's friendship
Shall claim the tenderest care—And yet, Alcæus,
This bosom now has terrors of its own,
I must confess I fear——

Cyrus. What fears afflict
Thy gentle breast?

Aspa. The danger of Alcæus:
Think'st thou I can behold the gallant youth,
Who free'd me from the ruffian grasp of power,
Expos'd to death, yet feel not for his safety?

Cyrus. My safety merits not Aspasia's care;
Nor think the succour this weak arm could give
To innocence distress'd, was more than Heaven
Claims from a heart, that, though in forests bred,
Glow's at another's suff'rings.

Aspa. Generous youth!
Wherefore, ah! wherefore has relentless fate
Involv'd such virtue in misfortune's maze!
And urg'd thy hand to shed thy prince's blood;
That hand, which seem'd by every God design'd
To guard the life it took.

Off. Remove the prisoner.

Cyrus. Farewell, Aspasia, and remember time
May soon dispell this cloud of seeming guilt
Now cast around Alcæus. [*Exit guarded.*

Aspa. [*Alone.*] Grant it, Heaven!
 What mean these heaving sighs, these swelling tears,
 Why flutters thus my heart? Is it compassion,
 Or gratitude to him whose valour sav'd me?
 Ah! no—I fear a gentler cause excites
 These strange emotions—Spite of all the pride
 My sex and rank inspire—I love Alcæus:
 This sylvan hero bears down my resolves
 That still have prov'd in vain: when with my father
 Chance led me first to visit good Mithranes,
 I gaz'd with pleasure on his blooming son;
 Again I saw, yet knew not that I lov'd him,
 'Till this day's act that sav'd me from dishonour—
 And yet for this day's act Alcæus dies—
 And shall he die for thee? Ah! no, Aspasia,
 The guilt was thine, thy fate has murder'd Cyrus;
 Then let me seek the king, plead for Alcæus,
 And for his forfeit life lay down my own. [*Exit.*

ACT III. SCENE I.

*A Wood. The Pavilion of Astyages seen at a distance. Enter
 MANDANE and MITHRANES.*

Mandane.

WHAT hast thou said, Mithranes? Is Alcæus
 My son, my dearest Cyrus?

Mith. Peace, Mandane,

O, Heavens! be heedful.

Mand. Where is now the danger?

Mith. Danger is ev'ry where: when cruelty
 Extends her iron reign, we ne'er can keep
 Too strict a guard upon our speech: a dream
 May rouse the slumbering fury: fell suspicion

On innocence will stamp the mark of guilt,
And tyranny assumes the mien of justice
To punish crimes that never yet had being.
The genial feast, the nuptial bed, the temples
Are not secure from treachery,

Mand. At least
Confirm my doubting thoughts.

Mith. What further proof
Can you require? Ask your own heart, Mandane;
Your heart will testify a mother's feeling.

Mand. 'Tis true, 't is true—O! I remember all——
When first I view'd Alcæus, how my blood
Thrill'd with some unknown passion! Why, Mithranes,
Would'st thou so long conceal him from my love?

Mith. I fear'd to trust maternal tenderness,
Which wisdom ill can rule; had not your sorrows
Awak'd my pity, had I not suspected
The worst from your revenge against Alcæus,
To you your son had still remain'd unknown.

Mand. And yet Mandane's wretched, envious fortune,
Spite of the sunshine that would gild the prospect,
Spreads o'er my day affliction's sable clouds.
Cyrus return'd and living must excite
A mother's dearest transports; but Cambyzes
Return'd, and doom'd again to banishment,
Unseen, unwelcom'd, swells this heart with anguish.

Mith. Alas! my princess, calm your grief; let hope
Point you to future scenes of happiness:
Heaven that preserv'd your Cyrus, will again
Restore Cambyzes to your longing arms,
And give him back to liberty and love.

Mand. Fain would I listen to the flattering sounds
Of happiness and peace—But yet, Mithranes,

Thou hast not told the fortunes of my child :
Relate whate'er his tender youth has suffer'd,
By what strange means—declare each circumstance.

Mith. Some fitter time must tell thee—in the grove
That leads to my retreat—meet me ere long,
And thou shalt learn it all—but soft ; from far
I see the king approaching.

Mand. Let us fly,
And bear to him the news that Cyrus lives.

Mith. O hold ! 'twas this I fear'd——

Mand. Thou know'st my son
Is now a prisoner.

Mith. But consent to leave me,
And keep his birth still secret from your father,
I plight my life to free him from his chains,
And gave him to your arms.

Mand. Is 't possible ?
And may Mandane in thy faith confide ?

Mith. Confide in me !—Almighty powers ! is this,
This the reward for all my loyal service !
Is then my truth suspected !

Mand. O ! forgive
Th' involuntary doubt, forgive the thoughts
Of one, who long the mark of sorrow's shafts,
Distrusts each promis'd joy—I know thy goodness ;
Yes, thou wilt still prevent my busy fears,
Minister to my hopes with faithful hand,
And to preserve the mother, save the son. [Exit.

Mith. Mandane, yes——still in this care-worn breast,
Thy Cyrus lives ; time, that unnerves these limbs,
Strengthens my loyal truth——be these white locks
An emblem of my faith——But see the king,
Impatient for the news of Cyrus' fate.

Enter ASTYAGES.

Asty. Mithranes !

Mith. Sir, your mandate is obey'd !

Be every fear that Cyrus rais'd, forgotten,
For Cyrus is no more.

Asty. I know it well :

How do I stand indebted to thy zeal :

And yet, my friend, all is not here at ease.

I fear our secret is betray'd ; Cambyzes

Reproach'd me with the purpos'd deed——Mithranes,

Tell me what says report ?——Does the loud tongue

Of popular invective point at me,

Or does suspicion sleep ?

Mith. No rumour yet,

Of this, my lord, has reach'd my watchful ear ;

Your guards convey'd Cambyzes pris'ner hence,

Nor aught from him has rous'd the public notice

Respecting what your thoughts suggest.

Asty. Enough——

Retire, my friend.

Mith. Permit me to remind

My sovereign master, that my son Alcæus——

Asty. I know what thou wouldst say——thy son's in bonds ;

Already have I in my thoughts resolv'd

To set him free, to heap rewards upon him ;

But yet we must beware, it might be dangerous

At once to pardon him, whom all the realm

Must mark for open vengeance ; such proceeding

Might give a sanction to whate'er the breath

Of discontent might raise against their king.

Trust to my care—I 'll watch th' important crisis——

Farewell, Mithranes.

[*Exit Mith.*

Asty. O, Astyages!

To what art thou reduc'd! The king's become
The slave of slaves—I now detest the wretch
Subservient to my fears—but death shall soon
Seal up his lips—Alcæus too shall die.
The fate of Cyrus yields a fair pretence——
But hold——should these by public justice suffer——
It must not be—some private hand were best——
But then, Cambyses——yes, he too must fall,
Or we are lost——What dire necessity
Plunges me deeper still in guilt! one crime
Begets a thousand! Heavens! how is my soul
Bewilder'd in extremes of rage and dread!
I'm cruel from my fears, and from my cruelty
My fears increase, while one eternal round
Of torture plays the tyrant in my breast.

Enter HARPAGUS.

Har. Alas! my lord.

Asty. What say'st thou, Harpagus?
Why are those looks of terror?

Har. Mighty king,
I fear for thee; I fear for Media's safety;
Ev'n majesty itself is not secure.

Asty. Hast thou discover'd aught of treason then
Against our person?

Har. No—but Cyrus slain
Alarms each loyal bosom, while his blood
Calls out for vengeance on the murderer's head.

Asty. My friend has thou then heard thy king's affliction?
Yes, cruel fate, at one unlook'd-for stroke,
Has robb'd my age of every promis'd comfort.

Har. O, mockery of grief! but with deceit
Deceit shall be repaid.

[*Aside.*

Asty. To increase my sorrow,
Justice forbids me to revenge the deed,
And punish on the wretch who murder'd Cyrus,
Th' involuntary crime—the care be thine
To guard him safe 'till we decree his doom.

Enter ASPASIA.

Aspa. O, mighty king! behold a prostrate maid,
Imploring grace.

Asty. Aspasia, speak thy guilt.

Har. What means my daughter! whither can this tend?

Aspa. A crime of deeper die ne'er stain'd a subject;
'Tis I'm the wretched cause of Cyrus' death;
'Tis I'm the wretched cause that Media mourns;
'Tis I alone am guilty, not Alcæus.

In my defence, alone, the ill-fated youth
Was urg'd, unconscious, to the deed—O, give
Your royal mercy breath, and spare his life.

Asty. Aspasia, rise; and learn whate'er the motive
That urges thus thy pity for Alcæus,
Though nature loudly plead within my breast
For vengeance on the hand that murder'd Cyrus,
Astyages, unbiass'd by her voice,
Will act as public justice shall determine.

Har. O, royal hypocrite! but this rash girl
Has wak'd a thought that 'till this hour escap'd
The cautious search of all-discerning age.
My liege, the prisoner, by his guards conducted,
Is this way bending.

[*Aside.*

[*To Asty.*

Asty. Let us then behold him,
Though nature at his sight recoil.

Har. He's here.

Enter CYRUS, guarded.

Asty. Say, is this youth the offspring of Mithranes?

Har. Dread sir, he is.

Asty. He bears a noble aspect;

Those looks erect, that open mien, bespeak not
A lowly birth—What say'st thou, Harpagus?

Har. Appearance oft deceives; not always does
The polish'd court display the fairest forms;
And in the simple rustic's homely cell,
Nature sometimes assumes a nameless grace,
Which greatness cannot reach.

Asty. Yet, Harpagus,

There's something in those looks that move me strangely.

Har. My fears increase. [*Aside.*] —Retire, my lord,
his presence

But adds to your affliction.

Cyrus. [*Advancing.*] Mighty king,

Ere you depart, permit me thus to approach

With reverend awe; howe'er this erring hand

May call for publick vengeance, yet believe

No conscious guilt draws down the stroke of justice;

Here then before your sacred feet——

Har. Forbear——

Intrude not rashly on thy sovereign's grief,

Think who thou art, and what has brought thee hither;

Let it suffice thee in respectful silence

To await the laws decree.

Cyrus. I stand reprov'd,

And bow me to the justice of the king.

Har. Still do you pause, my lord—what means this wonder?
Why are your looks thus chang'd?

Asty. I know not why:
I feel emotions never known before ;
And my heart melts with sudden tenderness :
I leave him to thy care.

[*Exit.*

Har. Again my soul's
At ease—Retire, Aspasia, with the criminal
I would be left alone. [Cyrus walks a part.

Aspa. My dearest father,
If e'er you lov'd Aspasia, if the hand
Of this Alcæus sav'd her from the rage
Of an inhuman spoiler, do not sully
Her brave deliverer with the name of guilt.

Har. Has he not shed the royal blood ?

Aspa. Alas !
He knew not that the youth he slew was Cyrus,
To guard his life he but repuls'd a force
That first assail'd.

Har. No more, but leave me.

Aspa. Oh !
If you defend him not, you never lov'd
Your poor Aspasia—Think you now behold her
All pale and trembling in the ruffian's power,
Hear her invoking earth and Heaven to aid ;
Behold Alcæus hasting to her rescue,
And say, my father, then——

Har. Take heed, Aspasia,
I fear me something more than gratitude
Is hid beneath this warmth—but mark me well,
Unthinking maid, and hear a father's caution :
Let not imagination raise such hopes
As thou may'st find too late but ill besit
Thy glory, and my own. [Exit Aspasia.
Let all depart,

And leave me with the prisoner. [Guards retire.

Thanks to Heaven,

I can at length, without constraint, address

My vows to Cyrus, from my prince's hands

Loose these vile manacles—before him bend

The humble knee of loyalty. [Kneels.

Cyrus. O! rise.

Har. Permit me here to pay my earliest tribute ;

Be this embrace the first, the sole reward

My truth shall challenge. [Embraces Cyrus's knees.

Yet forgive me, Cyrus,

If down my cheek unbidden steals a tear,

When I behold that young, that blooming grace,

Spite of my constancy, ideas rise

Of tenderest recollection—I confess

The father here—but hence, ye soft'ning thoughts,

Be witness, Heaven, above my pangs I prize

This interview, though purchas'd with a son.

Cyrus. Rise, my deliverer—and while I thus

Enfold thee in my arms, accept these tears,

The sole returns which gratitude can yield

For all thy suff'rings ; but above the rest,

For that unhappy son decreed to fall

An early victim in the cause of Cyrus.

Har. Let not the sorrows of a subject claim

The tears of royalty.

Cyrus. Does royalty

Exempt the breast from every social tie

That links mankind? Shall kings, my Harpagus,

Forget, that one inspiring breath to life

Awak'd the prince and peasant ; and shall he,

The public voice proclaims his people's father,

Not feel those sorrows which his children feel.

Har. Exalted youth !

Cyrus. Yes, I have heard it all.

Mithranes has unroll'd the secret page
That chronicles thy deeds ; there I've perus'd
All that I owe to thee——and yet, my friend,
When I reflect, that after years of exile,
Cambyses now return'd, is doom'd once more
To ignominious bonds ; when I reflect,
These eyes have never yet beheld, these arms
Embrac'd a father——

Har. But the hour approaches
Shall give thee ev'ry wish ; as yet the work
Is incomplete, when yon declining sun
Shall gild with feeble rays the temple's summit,
Thy fortune shall assume a brighter aspect.

Cyrus. But still, Mandane——ever honour'd name,
Still shall she mourn a son's imagin'd fate ?
Shall I not see her, Harpagus, and speak
The voice of comfort to a mother's grief ?

Har. Alas ! your filial piety o'er leaps
The bounds of cooler prudence——let us then
Be circumspect, my prince ; nor in a moment
Destroy the great, the labour'd work of years ;
But I must hence, Astyages expects me ;
Mean while, retir'd to good Mithranes' dwelling,
Securely wait the great event, which time
Prepares for speedy birth. [Exit.

Enter MANDANE.

Cyrus. O ! could Mandane
Surmise, that in Alcæus lives——

Mand. This way
They led him to the king. [Entering.

Cyrus. What tender sound,
No stranger to these ears——Ha! 'tis Mandane.

Mand. It is, it is my son, my only child,
My dear, my long lost Cyrus.

Cyrus. Heavenly powers!
She knows me!

Mand. Turn, O! turn for shelter here
Within these arms——O! wherefore dost thou shun me?
Why fly from my embraces?

Cyrus. Mighty gods!
What shall I answer?——

Mand. Scatter to the winds
Each lingering doubt——I am, I am thy mother——
Does not thy heart confess me?

Cyrus. O! no more,
There is a something here——forgive me, princess,
I dare no longer stay——

Mand. Dost thou avoid me?

Cyrus. Has she not known it all, and shall I still
Distract her bosom thus?——O! never, never,
Since fortune thus compels me——No, my oath
Is register'd above——the solemn tie
Mithranes only can release.

[*Aside.*

Mand. Go on:
Think with an eager mother's fond attention,
I listen to thy words——He hears me not!
Why dost thou hold a converse with thyself?
What means that restless step?——Why is thy speech
Confus'd and broken? Hast thou not been told
That I'm thy mother? if thou hast, ah! why
Would'st thou estrange thyself? and if till now
Thou knew'st it not, why wilt thou thus receive
A mother's love with coldness? Speak.

Cyrus. My blood
Is all in tumult, ev'ry throbbing pulse
Confesses nature's power.

Mand. Are these the transports
I vainly hop'd! Where are the starting tears
Of mutual fondness? Where the dear embrace,
And the enquires of impatient love?
This is too much—either thou'rt not my son,
Or, to complete Mandane's misery,
Nature in thee reverses all her laws.

Cyrus. Yes, I will fly this instant to Mithranes. [*Going.*]

Mand. Wilt thou not speak to me?

Cyrus. Yet, yet a while
Suspend your fond distress till my return. [*Going.*]

Mand. But 'ere thou goest, with one poor word relieve
These cruel doubts—art thou, or not, my Cyrus?

Cyrus. Farewell—I can no more—necessity
Compels me now to silence, but when next
We meet, this face shall undisguis'd declare
Th' emotions of my heart, and unreserv'd
These faithful lips pour all my soul before thee. [*Exit.*]

Mand. [*Alone.*] What may this mean? Are then my
hopes deceiv'd?
It cannot be—yet this mysterious meeting
Gives ev'ry fear th' alarm—Ye powers! that guard
(If such there are) a mother's peace, remove
These new sprung doubts; and, oh! direct my steps,
Lost and bewilder'd in this maze of fate. [*Exit.*]

ACT IV. SCENE I.*The Wood, &c. MANDANE alone.**Mandane.*

SUSPENSE, thou cruel state of human sufferings,
 Life's deadliest calm!—still, still my thoughts are fix'd
 On that dear youth I dare not call my son:
 Did he not plight his faith when next we met,
 To ease my soul?—He did—and hark he comes,
 And every doubt is o'er.

*Enter CAMBYSES.**Mand.* Ha! can it be?

What well known form——

Cam. Mandane! O! 't is she,

My life's best treasure!

*[Embraces.]**Mand.* Is it possible!

Cambyses, do I once again enfold him?

Art thou escap'd from bonds? what friendly hand——

Cam. A messenger from Harpagus o'ertook
 The guard that led me——but some other time
 Shall give thee all——for, O! I've much to tell thee,
 And love impatient grudges each delay,
 Each little pause of joy.

Mand. How hast thou borne
 A life of absence? how return'd again?
 How hast thou——but I cannot speak——let this,
 This dear embrace, speak where all words must fail—
 Hast thou yet heard our son——

Cam. O! there, Mandane,
 Ev'n at this meeting, while I hold thee thus,

My heart weeps blood——his infancy preserv'd
From threaten'd death, bred up to ripening manhood,
Then, then to fall a sacrifice at last,
To a curs'd ruffian's rage!——

Mand. What means my love?

O! were this true, Mandane might indeed
Bid ev'ry joy farewell.

Cam. Ha! true, Mandane,
Is there a dawn of hope that Cyrus lives?

Mand. Yes, I have been taught to hope, that he who fell
Was an impostor that assum'd his name,
And that the youth who slew him was our son.

Cam. Confirm it, pitying powers!——but say, Mandane,
Hast thou yet seen this youth?

Mand. 'T was not long since
He parted from me.

Cam. As I cross'd the wood,
Where yon tall poplars shade the dimpled pool,
I late beheld a youth, whose noble mien
Attracted my regard, I turn'd to gaze,
While with light steps he bounded o'er the turf;
His auburn locks flow'd graceful down his back.
Quick was his piercing eye; his manly shoulders
A spotted tyger's dreadful spoils adorn'd,
Some gallant trophy of his sylvan wars.

Mand. 'T is he, 't is that dear form that holds me now
In torture of suspense.

Cam. But when thou saw'st him,
What said he?

Mand. Little he replied to all
My fond address, and when he spoke, the words
Half falter'd on his tongue: his thoughts confus'd,
Seem'd big with something which he fear'd to utter.

Cam. Thy presence might abash a simple swain,
Brought up in woods, unskill'd in courtly phrase ;
But who reveal'd to thee his birth ?

Mand. Mithranes.

Cam. Ha ! did I hear thee right !

Mand. If we may trust
Mithranes' faith, by him was Cyrus bred
As his own son, and call'd by him Alcæus.

Cam. O ! treachery forg'd in hell ! Detested slaves !
Too credulous Mandane !

Mand. Ah ! what means
This frantic rage !

Cam. Alcæus is the assassin
That murder'd wretched Cyrus, the dire blow
Was given by him, and at the king's command.

Mand. What says Cambyzes !

Cam. Yes, I heard it all——
When first arriv'd chance led me to the dwelling
Of this accurs'd Mithranes, there conceal'd
I heard the king propose the deed, I heard
Mithranes promise, that his son Alcæus
Should be death's fatal agent—O, Mandane !
Judge what were then my thoughts ? rage urg'd me soon
To start from my concealment, when with Mirza,
The guards rush'd in, and I was made their prisoner.

Mand. Where, where are now the hopes I vainly fed ?
All lost, for ever lost !

Cam. Cyrus is slain,
And slain by this Alcæus——see'st thou not
Mithranes, fearing thy revenge, invents
This tale, to save his son from thy resentment ?
Does not the silence now of Harpagus,
Whose loyal truth is known, too well confirm it ?

Mand. O! 'tis too plain—Alcæus is the assassin—
Hence his confusion in my sight—for this
He flew from my embraces, and though he came
With purpose to deceive a mother's fondness,
His soul shrunk back, all traitor as he was,
And shudder'd at a thought of so much horror.

Cam. Couldst thou so soon believe—

Mand. Hadst thou, Cambyzes,
Heard how Mithranes spoke, while every word
Seem'd the pure dictates of his heart—to this
A strange emotion that Alcæus rais'd,
Gave sanction to the tale—and add to all,
That what we wish we easily believe.

Cam. Has then delusive hope but lur'd us on,
To plunge us deep in fathomless despair?

Mand. To lead a wretched mother to caress
The murderer of her son—O! my Cambyzes,
It is not grief I feel—'t is rage, 't is madness—

Cam. Thou shalt be satisfied,
This arm, Mandane, shall revenge—farewell.

Mand. But whither wouldst thou go?

Cam. To seek Alcæus,
To pierce his murderous heart—not all the powers
Of earth oppos'd shall save me from my sword;
Where, 'twixt yon steepy hills, th' embow'ring wood
Forms a dark vale, Astarte's fountain flows
With lonely noise; there will I wait, that path
Leads to his home—my fury now is loose,
And when this hand greets thee again, Mandane,
It greets thee with revenge. [Exit.

Mand. [Alone.] Strike home, Cambyzes,
And tell him it is a mother gives the blow!
What if the traitor should again return?
He comes!—O, Heaven! I shudder at his sight.

Enter CYRUS.

Cyrus. [*As entering.*] Bear, bear me swiftly to her—some kind spirit

Breathe gently on her sense, and bid her wake
To all a parent's rapture—Turn, Mandane,
Behold your son, your now acknowledg'd Cyrus.

Mand. O! most abandon'd slave! [*Aside.*

Cyrus. At length, Mithranes

Consents that in this wish'd embrace— [*Advancing.*

Mand. Forbear!

And dwells deceit in such a form! [*Aside.*

Cyrus. Ye gods!

How are those features chang'd! what means that glance
Of keen resentment! why am I repuls'd!
Or is it thus I'm punish'd for my silence
When last we met! What would my mother? Speak.

Mand. The name of mother rives my bleeding heart—

Cyrus. If I've offended, here I'll kneel and pray
Forgiveness for my fault—I swear by Mithras,
Whose chearing beam enlightens all, whose eye
Surveys the soul's recess, that while my lips,
Restrain'd by solemn ties, durst not confess
The feelings of a son, warm and alive
To nature's strongest power, my suffering heart
Bled for Mandane's pangs.

Mand. Be still my rage— [*Aside.*

There lives not one whose breast more warmly feels
Maternal tenderness—betwixt yon trees
Methought I heard some lurking spies—these woods
Are full of guilt and treason—smiling villain! [*Aside.*

Cyrus. Then let us seek some safer part to vent
These struggling passions—lead me where thou wilt,
I wait thy bidding—or if yet thou fear'st

To come with me might give suspicion birth,
Where shall we meet?—O! say.

Mand. I cannot speak.

[*Aside.*

Cyrus. Say, thou wilt follow, and I'll haste to where
Astarte's fountain bathes the neighbouring wood
Of thickest growth; in that sequester'd gloom
No prying eyes shall witness to our meeting
Thy Cyrus there—know'st thou the place?

Mand. I do.

[*Impatiently.*

Cyrus. Let me not long expect thee.

Mand. Hence, be gone!

[*Looking furiously at him.*

Cyrus. Celestial powers!—wherefore that dreadful look!

Mand. I would give way—but leave me——

Cyrus. Yes, I'll go;

And while I wait thy coming, ev'ry breeze
Shall seem the murmuring of a mother's voice;
Each little sound shall seem a mother's step,
Stealing to clasp a much-lov'd son! Remember
Astarte's sacred fount——

[*Exit.*

Mand. [*Alone.*] O, young deceiver!
He's gone!—What means my heart? Departing hence
He left methought, a strange emotion here;
Yes, spite of all my fury, I confess
The feelings of my sex—his graceful mien,
His tender speech, his blooming years, excite
Involuntary pity—wretched mother,
What must she suffer, when she sees her son
All gash'd, and bleeding with a thousand wounds——
But hence, this vain remorse! wilt thou, Mandane,
Compassionate the grief that others feel,
Forgetful of thy own?—no—let him die,
Thou art a mother too——

Enter ASPASIA.

Aspa. Tell me, Mandane,
Know'st thou what fortune yet awaits Alcæus?
Say, does he live? is he absolv'd or sentenc'd?

Mand. For pity's sake, name not Alcæus to me,
My ears detest the sound—yes, curst Mithranes,
I come—inspire me now with direst rage,
Give venom to my tongue, that every word
May plant a dagger in his heart! [Exit.

Aspa. [Alone.] How shall I learn his fate! unhappy youth!
Mandane's frantic grief—'t is thence I dread
Some cruel mischief—but my father comes.

Enter HARPAGUS.

Har. Aspasia, where's the princess?

Aspa. But even now
She went from hence, in all the pangs of sorrow.

Har. What can this mean? Has she not seen her son?
I fear some mystery. [Aside.] Tell me, Aspasia,
Aught said she of Alcæus?

Aspa. No, my lord,
But when I ask'd her of his fate—with looks
All pale and wild, she started at the sound,
Then charg'd me never more to name Alcæus,
And vanish'd from my sight.—You seem disturb'd,
Forgive me, sir, if, with a daughter's love,
I press too boldly on your private thoughts:
Indeed I am to blame—but yet I fear
All is not well.

Har. The time is teeming now
With great events, and think not that thy father,
When hopes and fears divide each other's breast,

Can unconcern'd survey the hour decreed,
Perhaps to fix the freedom of his country.

Aspa. Ere the glad hour of peace, while dangers rise
Shall I not tremble for a father's safety!
Cyrus is slain, and by his death deprives
The people of their long-expected joy
To hail the kingdom's heir. Who knows from hence,
What insurrections may be fear'd? the king
Is by his nature cruel, ever feeds
Suspicion in his soul; that oft incites him
To break the tenderest ties—Did not my brother,
Your lov'd Arsaces, fall an early victim?

Har. O! my poor boy! here dwells thy fate! and ven-
geance
Alone can blot it thence.

[*Aside.*

Aspa. Why, gracious powers!
Was I not steel'd with manly fortitude?
Why throbs this breast with more than female terrors?
O! that a better sex had given me sanction
To share in all your toils!

Har. No more my daughter,
The milder fame that waits on passive virtue,
Is woman's boast—but though thy gentle kind
Forbids to mix in the rough scenes of life,
Yet thus far let me tell thee, Harpagus,
From this eventful day, expects to gather
A fruit long planted, that Alcæus—

Aspa. Sir!

[*With emotion.*

Har. Be not alarm'd, I see that name has warm'd
The roses in thy cheek. Fear not, my child,
I will not chide thee; no, thou art my joy.
When first with me thou saw'st Mithranes' son,
Scarce now three moons elaps'd, thou mayst remember
Thy father's caution—

Aspa. And these faithful lips
Have never breath'd his name.

Har. I know it well——
O! thou art goodness all—and 'tis with grief,
With tenderness I speak—but, yet, Aspasia,
There is a cause—if thou regard'st thy peace,
If thou regard'st a parent's will, expunge
A passion from thy soul, which, ere the sun
Descends, may overwhelm thee in despair.

Enter MIRZA.

The king,
My lord, requires your presence. [Exit.

Har. I attend him:
Farewell, Aspasia, and remember—— [Exit.

Aspa. [Alone.] O!
I see, I see it all—remorseless love,
In every day of my succeeding life,
Plants the sharp thorns of sorrow—still, my father,
I will obey thee: yes, I will contend
Against this fatal passion; yet forgive me
If all is vain, at least the smother'd flame
Shall burn within, and if I cannot cease
To love, I can resolve to be unhappy. [Exit.

SCENE II.

*The Grove before the Dwelling of Mithranes. Enter
MITHRANES and MANDANE.*

Mand. There needs no more, Mithranes, I confess thee
A mirror of unsullied truth—proceed
No further in thy tale—I know already
What thou hast done for Cyrus, and Cambyses

Knows it not less—Invention has been rack'd
How to reward thy worth—perfidious slave ! [*Aside.*
'Tis true, the recompence that's giv'n, will ever
Fall short of thy desert—yet what is done,
Though it seem little in Mandane's eyes,
Mithranes, when he hears, may find too much.

Mith. What means Mandane? wherefore speak'st thou
thus

Of recompence and merits? by yon heaven,
My soul abhors the mercenary sounds!
Learn that my duty to my prince fulfill'd,
Comprizes all reward—this humble garb
Debases not the mind: thou know'st in me
These weeds are voluntary, that I chose
To lead this life of rustic solitude,
To keep, what still I boast, this breast unstain'd,
And never prove what thou would'st seem to think me.

Mand. Gods! can he thus dissemble? [*Aside.*

Mith. Thou hast started

A thought that calls a blush to these old cheeks,
And wrongs my honest services.

Mand. Forgive me,

I must confess, the warmth of gratitude
Transported me too far: I know full well
That to exalted minds, their deeds alone
Are their reward: and he who can attain,
As thou hast done, the sov'reign height of virtue,
Finds all within himself, tranquillity
With endless pleasure, that in part resembles
The state of the immortals—speak, Mithranes,
Hast thou not prov'd such happiness?

Mith. I have;

Nor would I change it for a thousand worlds.

Mand. I can no longer hold—detested villain !
Thou murderous traitor ! monster !

Mith. Say'st thou, princess !
Speak'st thou to me !

Mand. To thee—and could'st thou think
Thy frauds would be conceal'd ? and didst thou hope,
Thou wretch, that for my own, I should have clasp'd
Thy son in my embraces—no, perfidious !
I am not yet so hateful to the gods.
I've lost my Cyrus, but I'm not to learn
By what curs'd means—I know by whom he fell,
And can and will revenge it.

Mith. What distraction !
What cruel error clouds your reason !

Mand. Peace !
And mark me well ! now tremble if thou canst—
Know that this instant, while I speak, thy son
Gasp's for his latest breath.

Mith. What say'st thou ? ha !

Mand. Know too, thou wretch, 't was I, 't was I deceiv'd
And sent him to his fate.

Mith. Thou ! Heavenly powers !

Mand. Now see if thou hast aught to hope, the place
Is far remov'd from help, and he who there
Awaits him, is—Cambyses.

Mith. Ah ! Mandane,
What hast thou done ! O ! haste ! at least discover
The fatal place.

Mand. Indeed—so might'st thou come
To intercept my vengeance—thou shalt know it,
But not till it is drench'd with blood, the blood
Of thy lov'd son, Alcæus.

Mith. Princess, yet

Have pity on yourself, he whom you think
Alcæus, is your Cyrus—is your son——

Mand. Hope not again to cheat my easy faith.

Mith. Gape, earth, and swallow these time-wither'd limbs;
Heaven's swiftest lightnings strike this hoary head,
If what I speak be false.

Mand. Vain imprecations!

Familiar to the wicked—where's the wretch,
Harden'd like thee, who fears with impious tongue
To invoke the gods to falsehood?

Mith. Grant but this.

While here I'm kept in bonds, haste thou, prevent
The horrid deed, and if I then deceive you,
Return and vent on me your keenest rage;
Tear this old breast by piece-meal, for each hour
I've dragg'd this wretched life, invent a pang,
Till cruelty herself shall stand aghast.

Mand. O! subtle hypocrite! but naught avails thee;
I see thy purpose, driven to this extreme
At least thou would'st suspend the blow—thou know'st
I have no friend to trust, and thou may'st hope
The king mean time may hear, and bring thee aid.

Mith. What shall I do? Instruct me, gracious powers!
O! my poor prince!—Unhappy, fruitless cares.
Have I then toil'd my age for this! Mandane,
I here again adjure each pitying god,
In witness to this truth—the feign'd Alcæus
Is Cyrus—is your son—run, quickly save him;
Yet, yet believe me—If thou dost mistrust
This agony of grief, thou wilt become
An object hateful to the world, and all
Thy future days shall be despair and horror.

Mand. Rave on, for I enjoy it.

Mith. Mighty gods!
Do these white hairs deserve so little faith?
These furrows fill'd with tears——

Mand. 'Tis all in vain——
Those pangs but speak the parent—yes, barbarian,
Such is the state to which I am reduc'd
By thee——and such Cambyses feels——'tis now
Thy turn to prove what 'tis to lose a son!

Mith. Blind, wretched mortals! that too oft' exult
When misery hovers o'er them—Speak, Mandane,
Say, where is Cyrus?—thou wilt speak, but O!
'T will then be found too late!

Mand. Avaunt, thou traitor!
Hope not to shake my purpose!

Mith. Do I wake!
Where am I? ha! what darkness gathers round me!
Tell me, inhuman! Why too cruel gods!
Am I reserv'd for this—still art thou silent!
O! let me fly—but whither? some kind power
Direct my steps—'tis all in vain—behold!
He dies!—O save him, save him!——

[*Runs off.*]

Har. [*Within.*] I've sought him, but in vain!

Mand. Sure 'tis the voice of Harpagus.

Enter HARPAGUS.

Har. Mandane,
In happy time—hast thou beheld Alcæus?
Unless we find him, all our hopes are air.

Mand. Is this the purport of thy search—be calm,
I can inform thee of him.

Har. Thanks to Heaven!
Direct me to him—he must now be brought

Before the people—nothing more remains
But to produce him——

Mand. O! too generous friend!

I see thy aim, thou would'st appease my vengeance
With public punishment—I thank thy zeal,
But 't is too late, already has Mandane
Obtain'd revenge——

Har. Revenge! on whom?

Mand. On him who murder'd Cyrus.

Har. Speak'st thou of Alcæus?

Mand. I do.

Har. What means Mandane? has thy rage
Attempted aught against him? O! take heed,
Thou tread'st a precipice.

Mand. Ha!

Har. Know'st thou not
Alcæus is thy son?

Mand. My son!—O, Heaven!
Speak this again——

Har. Doubt not the truth—Alcæus
And Cyrus are but one.

Mand. O! all ye host above, assist me!

[*Going.*

Har. Whither?

Hear me, Mandane——

Mand. Let us fly, I cannot——

Cold, cold, my heart——

Har. What means the deadly paleness
That steals upon thy cheek? the fatal dews
Of death are on thee, and thy trembling knees
Totter beneath their burden. [Mandane sinks down.

Mand. Harpagus,

Fly to Astarte's fountain—save my son!
Perhaps he yet may live.

Har. What says Mandane!

Astarte's fountain?

Mand. Linger not a moment,
Even now he dies, and by a father's hand!

Har. Almighty powers! [*Runs off.*]

Mand. [*Alone.*] O, most accurs'd Mandane!
What fiend possess'd thy senses, when Mithranes
Too truly spoke—and is there then no glimpse
Of hope?—O, none!—all, all conspires to banish
The least kind doubt—these eyes beheld my son,
I heard his lips pronounce a mother's name,
My heart confess'd th' emotions of a parent;
And yet [*Rising*] methinks even now I see him, now
His voice is in my ears!—with what reluctance
He parted from me—O! my child! as if
His heart presag'd his fate—and I—distraction!—
O, horror! horror! hark, my husband calls!—
He kneels! that angel form!—those pleading looks!
Strike not—it is—it is—O! mercy, Heaven! [*Exit.*]

ACT V. SCENE I.

Another part of the Wood. MANDANE alone.

Mandane.

WHERE am I wandering! this way leads—but whither?
Hold, hold, my brain!—down, down, my busy thoughts,
All recollection's madness—there a train
Of horrid images crowd thick upon me!
Yon bubbling fountain streams with blood—I tread
On mangled limbs—What noise was that—a groan!

Enter MITHRANES.

Mith. Wearied with fruitless search, methought but now,
I heard the sound of wild distress——Mandane!

Mand. Ha! what art thou? [*Wildly.*

Mith. O! tell me where is Cyrus?
Does he yet live?

Mand. Who dares to speak of Cyrus? [*Raving.*
Is't thou?—Take heed—we are observ'd—look there!
See where he comes, all pale and bleeding!—ha!
Why dost thou turn those piteous eyes upon me?
Come, come, my son—nay, pr'ythee do not shun me!
Thy mother will no more betray thee——

Mith. Break,
Break my too stubborn heart——have comfort.

Mand. Comfort!
Curs'd be the tongue that speaks again of comfort!
Snatch me, ye whirlwinds, to some yawning gulph,
Let my remembrance perish, lest for me
Each son should execrate a mother's name.

Mith. What shall I say to sooth her?—Speak, Mandane,
'Tis your Mithranes, your old faithful——

Mand. Ha!
I know thee now, thou'rt Heaven's vicegerent, sent
To judge, and to condemn me——
Thou strict inquisitor of crimes, before
Whose great tribunal——see yon dreadful witness!
At length 'tis done—and I am sentenc'd!—Oh!——
Where have I been?——Mithranes!—— [*Recovers.*

Mith. How fares Mandane?

Mand. Harpagus has curs'd me
With all the horrid truth—and now he's gone
To save my son—but O! I fear too late!

Mith. Then yet there's hope——

Mand. Haste to Astarte's fountain,
There death displays his terrors!

[*Exit Mith.*

Mand. Pitying gods!

[*Kneels.*

In this short interval of sense, O! hear

A mother's anguish; save him, save my child;

Strike from his breast the lifted steel, nor curse

With a son's blood, a father's erring hand!

[*Rises.*

And now methinks some gentle spirit whispers,

Mandane, yet have hope—eternal justice

Can never fail. My Cyrus lives—he lives!

And I shall once again embrace——But hark!

What hasty steps!—ha! 't is Cambyzes! horror!

'T is done, 'tis done——

[*Swoons.*

Enter CAMBYSES, his sword drawn, and bloody.

Cam. My soul!—Mandane!—speak—she hears me not.
Senseless and cold—but see, life gently breathes
Through her pale icy lips—direct me, Heaven,
How to recall her wandering spirits home.

Enter CYRUS.

Cyrus. 'T is she, O! let me gently steal upon her,
Nor give her tender soul too soon the alarm!

Cam. Gods! Is not that the murderer of my son?

[*Turning.*

Cyrus. My mother pale and breathless!

[*Advancing.*

Cam. Pass no further.

Art thou not call'd Alcæus? speak.

Cyrus. I am.

Cam. My wife!

Look up, behold your wish'd revenge completed

By your Cambyzes' hand.

[*Attacks Cyrus.*

Cyrus. Yet stay—O, Heavens!
Tell me—art thou Cambyses?

Cam. Yes, thou wretch!
I am Cambyses—die——

Cyrus. My dearest father!
Defer your rage—first know me for your son,
Then plunge your weapon here, I will not shrink,
But bare my breast to meet the blow. [Kneels.

Mand. Where am I?
Ha! is it possible! What means that form? [Raising herself.

Cam. And shall I listen to his soothing tale,
All false as hell—no—perish. [Attacks Cyrus.

Mand. Hold, Cambyses! [Interposing.
Thou kill'st thy son!

Cam. Ha! kill my son! [Drops his sword.

Mand. My child! [Embracing Cyrus.
And do I clasp thee thus!—it is too much.

Cyrus. And do I now embrace a mother's knees?
And does she own me too?

Cam. Amazement!—speak,
Mandane, do I dream?—Can this be Cyrus?

Mand. O! yes—it is my Cyrus!—gracious Heaven
That snatch'd him from a father's rage!

Cyrus. My father! [Kneels.

Cam. Rise to my arms, my son! [Embrace.]—How is
my soul

Perplex'd amidst these strange events—Mithranes—

Mand. Mithranes still is true—but say what blood
Distain'd thy sword?—Didst thou not wait but now
With dreadful purpose?

Cam. No—ere I had reach'd
The appointed place, Mirza by chance assail'd me
With a few scatter'd guards; I wounded some,

Then, under favour of the sheltering wood
Escap'd from their pursuit; and hence the blood
That wak'd thy terrors.

Cyrus. At the sacred fount
I waited long, till Harpagus appear'd,
Disclos'd a wondrous tale, and bade me fly
To ease a mother's anguish.

Enter MITHRANES.

Mand. O! Mithranes,
What blest events!

Mitb. The time admits not, princess,
Of long congratulations—Harpagus
Has told me all; the hour of sacrifice
Is now at hand; my prince, retire awhile;
Thou too, Cambyzes—for this way the king
Goes to the temple.

Mand. Must we part so soon?

Cyrus. But for a time—farewell—lead, good Mithranes.

[*Exeunt Cyrus and Mithranes.*]

Enter ASTYAGES and MIRZA behind.

Mand. And wilt thou leave me too?

Cam. Mourn not, my love,
When next we meet, we meet in happier hour,
To part no more.

Asty. Mirza, 't is true—but hold,
Let us observe a while.

Cam. Yes, my Mandane,
Since Cyrus lives——

Asty. What do I hear?

[*Aside.*]

Cam. His fortune
Shall be our constant theme—Heaven, that preserv'd,

Has surely form'd him for a life of glory :
But I must hence—farewell.

Asty. Cambyses, stay.

[*Coming forward.*]

Mand. O, Heavens! the king!

Asty. Let not my presence check

Your rising joys, I came to share them with you ;

Disclose the wondrous truth : What pious care

Bred up his youth ? Where is he now conceal'd ?——

Not speak, Mandane——Does my daughter too

Refuse this satisfaction to a parent ?

Since then the father mildly pleads in vain,

The king shall force obedience——seize Cambyses.

[*Guards enter and seize him.*]

Enter HARPAGUS.

Har. [*In haste.*] *Astyages,*

Thou art betray'd—haste—stop the kindling tumult,

Thy presence only canst prevent——

Asty. What mean'st thou ?

Whence this new alarm ?

Har. The rumour spreads

That Cyrus lives, that now he 's at the temple,

All thither run with speed, to see and swear

Allegiance to him, while the madding crowds,

With general voice exclaim, ' Cyrus is king !

' Cyrus still lives, *Astyages* shall die.'

Asty. Perfidious slaves! is this the secret then

Your breasts conceal'd ?

[*To Cambyses and Mandane.*]

But henceforth I 'll forget

All ties of blood, both perish by this hand,

The victims of my just resentment.

[*Draws.*]

Har. Hold,

My king—if it be true that Cyrus lives,

Preserve his parents still, as hostages,
That may secure his faith.

Asty. Thou counsell'st well :
Remove them hence ; Mirza, the charge be thine
To guard them in my tent ; come, Harpagus,
And let us prove the worst ; but if we fall,
We will not fall alone.

Har. Assist me now, [*Aside.*
Ye demons of revenge ; nerve this good arm,
And, tyrant, if thou canst, escape my toils.

[*Exeunt Astyages and Harpagus on one side, and Cambyses and Mandane on the other, guarded.*]

SCENE II.

The Grove before the Dwelling of Mithranes. CYRUS alone.

Cyrus. Yet, yet a little, and thy fortune, Cyrus,
Shall break upon the light ; perhaps this instant
Verges on the discovery—teach me, Heaven!
To bear this burst of dignity ; but now
A simple inmate of these woods ; and now
The heir of Media's empire ! humble merit
Suffic'd Alcæus—narrow bounds prescrib'd
His social duties, but the soul of Cyrus
Expands to nobler views ; a prince's virtues
Are not confin'd to private life, but grasp
The happiness of millions.

Enter ASPASIA.

Aspa. Haste, Alcæus !
Haste, and partake the general transport ! Cyrus
Yet lives, again he's found—the wretch who fell
By thee, usurp'd his title.

Cyrus. Fair Aspasia,
How know'st thou this?

Aspa. There is no room for doubt :
These plains re-echo nothing now but Cyrus. [*A Shout.*
Hark ! how applauding shouts proclaim their rapture !
Some scatter flowers, or round their temples bind
The festive wreaths, with tears of gratitude
Some pay their thanks to heaven : from rural toil
This drags his fellow ; in the unfinish'd furrow
Here rests the share ; there roves, without their shepherd,
The flock forsaken : mothers wild with joy,
Teach their young sons to lisp the name of Cyrus ;
Even age forgets its feeble state ; and children,
Taught by example, though they know not why,
With infant prattle join the common voice.

Enter MITHRANES and Guards.

Mith. Let us to the temple,
My prince, these guards by Harpagus are sent
For your defence—come then, and with your presence,
Ease your impatient friends.

Cyrus. Is then my fate
Already publish'd ?

Mith. All is now proclaim'd,
And Harpagus has, by undoubted proofs,
Reveal'd your birth.

Cyrus. Didst thou not wish, Aspasia,
To gaze on Cyrus ?—now thou mayst behold him——
I am that Cyrus,

Aspa. Ha !

Cyrus. Why droops Aspasia ?
Dost thou not joy in my success, or does

The heart that trembled for Alcæus' danger,
Repine at Cyrus' fortune?

Aspa. Pardon, sir,

A simple maid, nor wonder that the blush
Overspreads my cheek, when I reflect, for me
My sovereign's life expos'd——

Cyrus. Rise, fair Aspasia,
And know, the daughter of my Harpagus,
In her defence may justly claim that life,
Her father's truth preserv'd.

Enter Messenger.

Mith. Dispatch, my son——

But who comes here?—Whence art thou?

Mess. From the temple,
Where all is tumult and dismay; the king,
Encompass'd by a rebel band, is threaten'd
With speedy death.

Cyrus. Swift let us fly to save him:
Whate'er the errors of Astyages,
His kindred blood flows through the veins of Cyrus,
And nature shudders at a parent's danger——
Away, my friends!—farewell, farewell, Aspasia!

[Exeunt Cyrus, Mithranes, and Guards.]

Aspa. *[Alone.]* Alcæus—Cyrus!—O! that fatal thought—
My father too—did I not hear even now,
Of tumult and revolt—amidst the waste
Of rebels rage, where death wings every shaft,
Who knows what perils may surround his life?
Then let me fly, and intercept with mine,
The point that threatens the breast of Harpagus!
Or shall he fall—which all ye powers avert,
At least partake his fate, and die beside him!

[Exit.]

SCENE III.

Outside View of a Magnificent Temple. A clashing of Swords.

ASTYAGES, his Sword drawn; Enter HARPAGUS.

Asty. O! perjurd traitors! where is now the faith,
You vow'd your king? do all forsake my cause?
No, some shall yet be found—what, Harpagus,
Thou com'st in time to give thy sovereign aid;
Thy loyal sword——

Har. Tyrant, thou art deceiv'd,
Know, 'tis by me thou fall'st.

Asty. By thee? confusion!
Is this thy faith?

Har. What faith was due from him,
Whose son thy fury murder'd? long, too long
A father's breast has borne the smother'd anguish;
At length it bursts to vengeance; and this hour
Exact's full retribution—blood for blood!

Asty. Dissembling traitor!

Har. 'T is not now a time
To waste in vain debate—this to thy heart,
This for my poor Arsaces! [Fights.]

Cyrus. [Within.] Hold, my people!
What rage transports you? 't is your Cyrus calls,
Save, save the king!—where is Astyages?

Enter CYRUS, his Sword drawn, attended.

Cyrus. 'T is then too late—turn, villain——

[Goes to kill Harpagus, who turns to him.

Harpagus!

What hast thou done!

O! thou hast stain'd my infancy of glory,
And late posterity will brand the name
Of Cyrus, that to ascend the Median throne,
He waded through that sacred blood—my king!
Lift up your eyes, behold your Cyrus here.

Asty. Say, what art thou?—O! I have wander'd long
In darkness, now methinks the scene is drawn;
And death, that great remembrancer, calls forth
A thousand black ideas—who art thou?

Cyrus. Your Cyrus, Mandane's Cyrus.

Asty. Art thou

Indeed my Cyrus? art thou he whose life
My cruelty pursu'd? but heaven is just;
Astyages shall be no longer fear'd—
Cyrus to thee, as to Mandane's offspring,
My crown shall now descend—my dearest son,
Be warn'd by me—still venerate the gods,
And with thy glory veil the shame of—oh!

[Dies.

Cyrus. There fled the royal spirit.

Har. Forgive me, prince, howe'er resentment urg'd
This hand against Astyages, my faith
To thee has been unshaken—witness, Heaven,
I die, and die with joy; since I behold
Cyrus restor'd to Media.

[Sinks.

Cyrus. Ha! thou faint'st!

Har. Yes, generous youth!—thou need'st not seek revenge
For what this arm has done—ere I had reach'd
Astyages, his weapon pierc'd my breast,
And mark'd me for the shades—this deed of death
Was mine alone—to none my soul imparted
Her pre-conceiv'd revenge; then with me die
Remembrance of it—yet there's something more—
I have a daughter—O! I faint! if aught

I may implore of Cyrus, let her find
Protection———Oh!———

[*Dies.*

Cyrus. Thou most unhappy man!
Why was thy life thus clos'd, that Cyrus scarce
Without a crime can pay the grateful sorrow
Thy merit claims——

Enter CAMBYSES, MANDANE, and MITHRANES.

Mand. Alas! alas! my father!

[*Runs to Astyages, and kneels by him.*

Cyrus. Cambyses and Mandane here!

Cam. Amidst

The rising tumult now, a chosen troop
Of friends assail'd the royal tent, when Mirza
Was slain and we were freed.

Mand. Then he is gone—
His faults sink with him to the grave—farewell,
Farewell for ever—my remembrance now
Looks back but on those happy years, when all
A father's fondness watch'd his darling child——
These tributary tears——

Cam. Awake, Mandane,
To better scenes—the tempest that so long
Has blacken'd round us, shall be now dispell'd,
And days of peace succeed.

Mith. See where Aspasia, [Looking out.
Frantic with grief, breaks through the pitying crowd,
And seeks for Harpagus.

Cyrus. Unhappy fair one,
Look to the lovely mourner—thou, Mandane,
Wilt sooth her orphan sorrows.——

Cam. Droop not, son,
But rouse the latent hero; think from thee

What fate exacts ; on thee what nations turn
Their long desiring eyes——

Cyrus. Alas, my father!

How shall I run this arduous race of glory?
Be present thou, and with maturer counsels
Support my erring youth : thou too, Mithranes,
Still guard that virtue which thy fostering care
First taught to bloom in life's sequester'd vale ;
O ! may it now through Asia's realms extend
The blessings of my sway, that every age
May learn to venerate the name of Cyrus!

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[*Exeunt omnes.*]



EPILOGUE.

Written by a FRIEND---Spoken by Mrs. YATES.

*WELL, here I am, thank Heaven, no more Mandane ;
Among ourselves this bard is but a Zany.
Says I—when first he offer'd me the part,
I hope 't is nature—levell'd at the heart !
Says he—a husband thought far off to roam,
Disguis'd, and unexpectedly comes home :
A son returns, lost twenty years, d'ye see,
To call you mother, though not thirty-three.
This (I reply'd) will do, if I can guess,
For this, indeed, is natural distress——
Distress (he cry'd) you quite mistake the thing ;
Astyages, you'll find—had dreamt—the king——
I stopp'd him short—perhaps it may be true,
That your old nature differs from your new.
From various causes equal sorrows flow,
All realms and times have some peculiar woe :
With us what griefs from ills domestic rise,
When now a beau—and now a monkey dies !
In this our iron age, still harder lot,
A masquerade, no ticket to be got——
Your obsolete distress may now be told——
Let's see—there's ravishing—that's very old.
There's love that scorns a title and estate——
These woes of love are vastly out of date !
Then there's your martyr to his country's weal——
What strange distress these ancients us'd to feel !*

*The love of country now indeed runs high ;
They prove its value most, who dearest buy ;
Think what our patriots pay in sterling gold,
A single borough for seven years to hold.
Though here in statu quo I still remain,
I've oft been marry'd, ravish'd, crown'd, and slain !
None of all these have been my fate to-night,
So us'd to fancy'd anguish and delight ;
Yet let me hope you felt the part I bore,
Give me your plaudit—we can wish no more.*

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THE END.